

April 19, 2013

Appropriations Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
State of Connecticut
300 Capital Ave
Hartford Connecticut 06016

Mr. Bobby Berriault
Student Senator
Student Government Association
Central Connecticut State University
1615 Stanley Street
New Britain, Connecticut 06050

Madam Chairs, members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Bobby Berriault and I am a student at Central Connecticut State University. I am currently a student senator on our Student Government Association representing the student body. I am writing to the committee today to submit testimony requesting that the amount of funding towards higher education to the 17 colleges and universities in the ConnCSU system be increased. I am writing to your committee to request that \$140 million dollars be added to the state's budget for the 17 colleges and universities over the next two years.

Within the last 20 years, the amount of funding that is allocated to higher education in our state has been cut in half. The less funding that we receive from our state government, the more students will have to pay out of pocket. Within the past two years alone \$93 million dollars has been cut from the Connecticut State Universities and the community colleges. As it stands right now, the 96,000 students across the 12 community colleges, the 4 state universities, and the Charter Oak College funds approximately 60% of the total expenditures of the 17 colleges and universities in our state.

As a Student Senator representing the student body at CCSU, I know that many of my friends and classmates are struggling with the high costs of attending class. Many of them are working a full time job while attending college part time. Many of them are struggling with trying to come up with enough money just to stay in school. Personally, I am struggling. My financial aid for this summer has been cut in its entirety because of the federal budget cuts that were made due to the sequester coming into effect. Because Republicans and Democrats were unable to compromise in Washington DC, I now have to come up with \$4,000+ additional dollars so that I can take two summer classes.

I am not against paying higher tuition. That is not the issue. I recognize that in this era of 'shared sacrificed' I should be responsible for some of the costs of getting an education. I recognize that from

time to time my tuition is going to go up. However, I feel that it is not right for my state government to ask me and my fellow classmates to pay more out of pocket for our education while we are seeing larger class sizes, fewer professors, entire academic departments that are being cut and merged with other academic departments at our colleges and universities.

Three weeks ago, Governor Malloy has announced \$95 million dollars in grant funding for capital projects at the state's colleges and universities. With all due respect to the Governor and his administration, our state universities and community colleges do not need additional new buildings. How can we afford new construction of buildings and classrooms when we cannot afford to take care of the buildings that we already have?

There is a staffing crisis at our states higher educational institutions. We need more professors, not more buildings. Our schools have been virtually unable to hire new professors since the economic crisis hit our state in 2008. In addition, the number of ad hoc professors across the 17 colleges and universities have risen significantly while the number of full time tenured professors have decreased significantly since 2008. These ad hoc professors have been forced to take on a greater workload with extremely limited resources. Our state colleges and universities need more professors before we build more classrooms.

In addition, in the Governor's proposed budget, the University of Connecticut will receive \$1.5 billion dollars over the next ten years so that they can build new classrooms, hire additional professors, and significant increase its STEM programs. I recognize that UConn is the face of the Connecticut higher education system, but using that metaphor if UConn is the face of higher education, then the 12 community colleges and the 4 state universities along with the Charter Oak College is the backbone of Connecticut higher education.

According to the Board of Regents website, 90% of graduates from the ConnCSU system stay in the state to pursue a career path contributing to Connecticut's economic recovery. 95% of the students in the 17 colleges and universities are accepted to our schools as Connecticut residents. Many of us have paid taxes to our state prior to attending college. Our families and our parents have been paying taxes in our state for many years prior to sending us to college. While I do not oppose, and in fact I support UConn's long term financial investment, I want to ask the members of the appropriations committee when will we get a long term investment similar to that of UConn's.

I would like to request that the members of the Appropriations committee vote to support Connecticut's higher education by providing \$140 million dollars in additional funds to our 17 colleges and universities. As someone who has been elected by the student body to represent my friends and my classmates, I want to make clear to this committee that students don't mind paying 5% more on average to attend classes next year, but if we are being asked to pay more, we don't want to see a further decline in the quality of our education value.

Please feel free to email me at Robert.Berriault@my.ccsu.edu if the committee or any of the members have any further comments, questions, or concerns.

Best regards,

Bobby Berriault
Student Government Association
Central Connecticut State University